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SUBJECT: AMB. RICE MEETS WITH BOTSWANA PERM. REP. TO THE UN

Classified By: ECOSOC M/C Robert Hagen for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary - In an April 02 meeting between Ambassador Rice and Botswana's Ambassador to the UN Charles T. Ntwaagae, Ambassador Rice expressed her appreciation for Botswana's friendship and leadership in Southern Africa, and inquired about recent political developments in both South Africa and Zimbabwe. Ambassador Ntwaagae expressed concern over deteriorating political stability in Southern Africa, but voiced confidence in the 'strong relationship' between Botswana and the United States. End Summary

12. (C) Although Ambassador Ntwaagae said that Botswana's attention remained focused on national elections in October 09, he expressed concern over Zimbabwe's continually fragile power-sharing agreement. Ntwaagae gloomily submitted that 'Mugabe remains in the driver's seat' despite President Khama's continued call for new elections in Zimbabwe. With increasing rates of crime related to illegal immigration from Zimbabwe into Botswana, Ntwaagae said that his people were now asking the question: 'why should we pay for Zimbabwe's mess'?

13. (C) Ambassador Ntwaagae said he regretted the untimely death of Morgan Tsvangirai's wife under 'such suspicious circumstances', but, when pressed, was unable to defend his suspicion or provide further insight into Mrs. Tsvangirai's death. Ntwaagae did, however, respond to Ambassador Rice's request for suggestions to mitigate the suffering of the people of Zimbabwe, saying that targeted contributions to health and education would be most beneficial.

14. (C) In response to Ambassador Rice's inquiry about upcoming elections in South Africa, Ambassador Ntwaagae said that while he expected ANC leader Jacob Zuma to be elected President in the April 22 elections, political wildcards such as the Congress of the People (Cope), Desmond Tutu, and Winnie Mandela could all influence election outcomes. Those outcomes are of particular interest to Botswana, with impacts on tourism and trade chief among concerns.

15. (C) Ambassador Ntwaagae volunteered his concern to Ambassador Rice that former Namibian Foreign Minister Hidipo Hamutenya and his RDP party were mounting increasing pressure to unseat the current Namibian President Hifikepunye Pohamba. Were this to happen, Ntwaagae suggested that Hamutenya would likely install a deeply partisan government drawn along tribal lines, leaving Botswana politically isolated in a deteriorating region of the world.

16. (C) Lastly, Ambassador Ntwaagae expressed his pleasure in hearing that the United States would be running for election to the UN Human Rights Council, and said that the United States Government could count on Botswana's full support. Rice